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REFLECTIONS FROM THE ROCK

Spring is here and summer is just around the corner! Camp Director Mike Mattson and I look forward to heading back up to East Waterford in preparation for our 84th season.

There are many exciting programs and adventures planned for the summer: We are broadening our specialized art and comprehensive wilderness adventure programs, enlarging our swimming area and expanding the boating area with more docks and accessibility for all to enjoy. The Allen Kearns Library continues to provide a great outlet for boys who need just a "little extra" help or enjoyment with summer reading and/or tutorial under the guidance of Tracy Goodwin. Our senior and administrative staff return with the support and teamwork of an all-star veteran cabin/activity staff. We have eight counselors-in-training plus many new campers from Luxemburg to the Dominican Republic and right here in Oxford Hills, ME. Our 24 day Maine Wilderness Adventure Program is ready to go! We will be also celebrating 10 seasons of **Birch Rock Family Camp** this season August 13 – 17, 2010!

However, we are not fully enrolled and we kindly ask for you help in perpetuating and promoting the lifelong lessons and values of Birch Rock!

In the spirit of camp motto's "Help the Other Fellow," I am asking all members of the Camp community to think of boys (and families) who would benefit from the Birch Rock experience this summer. Given our small size, every single boy makes a difference!

Birch Rock Camp provides more than recreation, it is a life-changing experience for young men to develop independence, gain specialized skills in sports and activities, improve social relationships and learn to appreciate the natural world of Maine.

Continued on page 2

Spring 2010

THE BIRCH BARK

P.O. Box 148, Waterford, Maine 04088

Winter: (207) 741-2930 Summer: (207) 583-4478

birchrock@birchrock.org www.birchrock.org

Rich Deering '73, Alumni Director • Michael Mattson '83, Camp Director

THE ALUMNI NEWS LETTER OF BIRCH ROCK CAMP

SERVING HIS COUNTRY & HIS COMMUNITY

— ANDREW CHASE —

By Rich Deering '73

He is lean and runs with the pack. He is articulate and very spirited. He is sincere and full of enthusiasm. He is a faithful friend and loyal Birch Rocker. He has been a camper, counselor, graduate student and now a commercial pilot. We call him – "The Cheeser," and he will be returning this summer after a long hiatus to the shores of Lake McWain. He is Andrew Chase, USAF.



After completing his studies in Aerospace, Flight, Homeland Security and International Relations at Embry-Riddle University for the past four years, Andrew and I had a chance to catch up at his parents new home in Beaufort, South Carolina. Andrew was ready and wired to go! His infectious enthusiasm and energy catapulted some wonderful stories about his personal life adventures from his time at BRC to his current quest of Air Force Officer Training School at Maxwell AFB in Montgomery, AL. As of the end of April, Andrew will be commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the USAF. Here are some excerpts of our conversations:

RD: What calling did you have to join the Air Force?

AC: I am all about having a job and mission that is genuinely important and a benefit to society. The Air Force Rescue's motto (my primary mission) is "These things we do that others may live" is really what it is all about. It is possible to make an impact everyday no matter how big or small and that's what I'll look to do. In the bigger picture I felt it was important to serve, especially under a capacity in which I could

utilize my education and flying skills. The military is really less about one self and more about the big picture and greater good. One of the beautiful things about the military is EVERYONE has a very important and specific job ranging from support personnel to those on the front lines. No matter ones rank or however unglamorous the job everyone has a vital role to play in order to complete the larger mission.

RD: How did you select Embry-Riddle?

AC: I literally knew I was going to be pilot. Embry-Riddle has been around since 1926 (just like the Rock) and has always been known as the worldwide leader in aviation higher education. Embry-Riddle is regarded as the "Harvard of the skies" and I knew that is where I wanted and needed to be. It's the only place in the world where a student can fly (all the way through a FAA multi-engine instrument license) and earn a very highly respected degree at the same time. Daytona Beach also seemed to be a pretty good place to be too.

RD: How did your experiences at BRC affect your ER experiences?

AC: Well ER and BRC have both been around since 1926. But it is the basics – the basic life skills learned mostly at camp that set you up for success later in life. Things like time management, attention to detail and effective communication are all very important in life and in the cockpit. I began acquiring these skills while at camp.

RD: What's next?

AC: After Officer Training School, it's Birch Rock and my return to Maine.....I cannot wait! Then I learn to fly DA-20s in Pueblo, Co in the fall. I continue a full year of intense Pilot training in the T-6 Texan II and the T-1 Jayhawks. In 2011 I work with more basics of flying the Hercules and learn night vision goggle flying, tactical maneuver...etc at the Little Rock AFB, AR. I'll continue with very advanced training for Special Operations for aerial refueling of special operations helicopters, really my finishing school before going active.

FINDING MY PASSION

By Robert David Weeks '99 –

Continued from page 1

Since 1926, Birch Rock has stood the test of time to promote the ultimate summer camp experience and it through our valued alumni, parents and friends. Your advocacy and promotion of our camp make all the difference.

In this spring edition of the **BIRCH BARK**, we are delighted to share once again from our graduating high school seniors and a college senior, the future camp leaders, essays about their own unique personal adventures and influences from the Rock. Their own stories tell our camp story. We are very proud and applaud each one of them!

Birch Rock would love to hear from you and capture your memories at camp. Please send us any photos that you would like to share, and/or just your email so that we can keep you rekindled to the BRC. Our website: www.birchrock.org has all the most current camp information. And do not forget to share your history on our alumni site: www.birocapedia.org

Faithfully,
Rich



by Rich Deering '73 -

The early morning mist begins to clear, while the sun comes across the horizon. It is the beginning of a beautiful day. As I awoke to the sounds of the tropical birds outside and the insects buzzing around the room I took in a deep breath and still could not believe that in only an hour I would be traveling in the forests of the scenic mountainous region of Chang Mai, Thailand to greet, care for and ride the elephant I would come to know.

As I prepared to depart on my adventure, I was determined to take full advantage of this once in a lifetime opportunity with Rustic Pathways, a travel company specializing in offering memorable service experiences. Upon arriving at the elephant camp the Mahouts or elephant trainers greeted my group with open arms and warm hearts. The Mahout that would become my teacher for the next week went by the name of Ta We and the elephant that he worked with was known as Pang Boom Me. The relationship that the Mahout and elephant share is one that is very similar to that of a marriage. It is so strong that a death on either side can leave the other side permanently damaged mentally and even physically. When told about this incredible bond shared by the trainer and elephant, I was a little intimidated to step into the relationship already created and try to form a new and similar bond between myself and the elephant. Ta We, however, was very encouraging and over the next few days I began the process of getting to know my elephant and allowing her to get comfortable with my presence and scent. As the bond became stronger over the next five days, it was getting closer to the day when we would take our elephant out into the forest for a night and complete the bond that had been created.

This growth experience taught me a lot about my own persona. It educated me to take personal responsibility for the month long experience I would be having in another country with Rustic Pathways. Being the first time traveling overseas on my own, I faced challenging moments adjusting to different ideas and traditions as well as learning how to cope with the language barrier that was present. I am thankful that I was able to provide service to a Thai community, while living in it and learning about its culture. I learned how the Thai have developed a respect and love for elephants who have helped them with such work as logging. Being involved in service is a big part of what I do and have learned through my life that it is more gratifying and satisfying to give to others rather than to receive. I am truly grateful that I found the organization Rustic Pathways, for it helped me find my passion for service and enabled me to discover a love for traveling the world.

RD will be attending the College of Charleston in South Carolina this fall



THANK YOU!

By Campaign Chair, David C. Weeks '70s

Your donation is an acknowledgment of the value of Birch Rock in character and community development. Just as we are appreciative of the "gifts" BRC has given to you, the camp is grateful for your "gift." Your contribution and support has helped us to enhance and sustain Birch Rock's special summer camp experience. We graciously applaud the following 2009 Capital, Endowment, Annual, Scholarship and In Kind gifts to the Birch Rock Camp Community.....and all the Birch Rock Parents!

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HELP THE OTHER FELLOW

By Cole Schlecht '00



My first true experience of community began ten years ago at my second home. I was only seven and already being sent away for the summer. I was driven eight hours up to East Waterford Maine to attend a sleep away camp called Birch Rock. I was scared and sad at the idea of being so far away from home for the whole summer. I never thought that within days, the atmosphere and the people would capture me and I would feel so much at home. Even as young as I was, I knew the reason I was able to integrate so easily into this new environment was because of a strong sense of community. Like a family, the Birch Rock Community was welcoming, nurturing, stimulating, and loving. I attribute so much of my self-growth to this camp that is built around the motto "Help the Other Fellow." I willingly and enthusiastically returned to Birch Rock for the next eight summers as a camper, and then as a counselor in training. Last summer, I was a camp counselor and activity instructor, and gave back to the community that had helped me discover so much about myself.

I write about my experience belonging to this wonderful camp because of the profound impact it has made on my life. I have built a network of lasting friendships and am forever bonded to this community. As I go on my journey I have a great appreciation and understanding of the role that Birch Rock has played in my life and what I have to offer as a member of that community. I eagerly look to become a part of other communities. As I go through this college application process, I realize that what is most important to me is an overall feeling of belonging and a place that I can call home.

The University of Pennsylvania Hospital is a community I would very much like to belong to. It was very impressive to learn that it was the nation's first hospital. Even more important to me is the Hospital's motto, "Take care of him and I will repay thee." which reminds me of Birch Rock's "Help the Other Fellow." Both principles are foundations of a strong community.

When attending the Multicultural and Diverse Open House, I had the opportunity of seeing first hand the social enthusiasm and unity that was being displayed on that stage from students from various clubs and activities. Although there was only a small sample of the University of Pennsylvania social scene, I could still see the strength of the community.

At camp we tell the story every year about the wolf pack and how everyone needs to work together and contribute. A thriving community involves everyone helping out, being warm, welcoming, and motivated. I want to make a difference with my life. I want to "Help the Other Fellow" directly in the medical field. Socially and intellectually, I will strive to bolster the already strong community at The University of Pennsylvania. I am a well-rounded person, with many interests. Having been a member of a great community for ten years, I understand and appreciate how it works. At Penn, I am looking to contribute as a leader so I can "Help the Other Fellow." I'm looking for the right fit, a new community so that I can become forever linked and give back to a place I call home.

Cote will be attending Cornell University in New York this fall.

DOING THE RIGHT THING

By Zack Lynn '02



One of my first memories of Birch Rock is the first time I looked above the double doors in the lodge. The phrase "Help the Other Fellow" was painstakingly carved into a plaque. Although I was impressed by the size and quality of the plaque, I was not immediately impressed by the message. By the end of my first summer, I came to respect those words as well as other guiding principles of the camp such as "Run with the Pack." At our community meetings called "Tree Talk", we discussed concepts and traits like honesty, individuality, communication and trust. These discussions and the simple aphorisms which serve as camp mottos make up my informal integrity contract.

When I was a camper at Birch Rock Camp, the counselors were gods. Each counselor seemed like a professional athlete, a rock star, a comedian and an older brother rolled into one. Some of them even had beards. Whatever they did was immediately the coolest and most interesting thing I had ever seen. Unlike athletes, rock stars, comedians and some older brothers, the counselors at Birch Rock were also moral paragons. With each new guiding principle I learned, I could see it embodied in the staff. It took a while but eventually I began to live by those principles as well. The same was true of my fellow campers. I cannot

count all the times when a cabin mate helped me make my bed or when as a group, we helped a weaker hiker make it to the top of a mountain. Whenever a dish of food is spilled at a meal, the counselors almost have to restrain the campers because everyone in the area wants to help.

When I was fourteen years old, a counselor asked me to look after one of the younger campers who was having a hard time getting settled in. The kid was three years younger than me, short, skinny and a little geeky. He had not made any friends since he had been there and he desperately wanted to go home. Although it was almost painful at first, I began spending time with him. I would sit with him at meals. I went to every single lower camp swim period with him even though I was the only camper my age. Whenever we did a camp-wide activity, I sought him out just so I could help him have a good time. Within a few days, he began to enjoy camp and no longer wished to return home. On parent visiting day, he introduced his mother to me and we ate lunch together. I was even able to convince him to stay at camp for seven weeks instead of three. It was tough hanging out with

him during the first few days. Neither of us was happy: I was stuck with him and he was stuck at camp. Eventually my commitment to him and to "Help the Other Fellow" helped both of us. I was actually having fun with him and he was enjoying camp.

As a counselor this past summer, Help the Other Fellow was my job. Whether it was consoling a homesick camper or helping out in the kitchen, I was constantly living by Birch Rock's guiding principles. As any Birch Rock counselor can tell you, staff unity is crucial for every Birch Rocker's summer. I was lucky that I had spent the last seven summers hearing the phrase "Run with the Pack." With every bite of salad that I eat at Birch Rock, I hear the words, "Be a Beacon", urging me onward. During my eight summers at the Rock, I have come to realize that doing the right thing almost never stops you from having fun.

Zach will be attending Colby College or Bates College in Maine this Fall.

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WISH LIST

BRC appreciate your contribution to the camp community. Some items we wish for are:

Internal-Framed Backpacks \$100 each
New Kayaks \$300 each
New SunFish Sailboat \$3000
Art Supplies \$400
Pottery Wheel \$500
Nature Program Equipment
5 foot Commerical Outdoor Gas Grill
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Birch "Rock is a 501c3 nonprofit corporation.
All donations received are tax-deductible.

Please contact us birchrock@aol.com if you might be able to accommodate any of those wishes.

Thank you!

MY BIRCH ROCK

By Bob Donahue '02

It was an incredibly comforting sound. The leaves dancing and rustling in the wind, the crackling and snapping of the fire, the distant rummaging of a hungry squirrel, and the gentle lapping of the waves upon the rocks. The sun was a huge ripe orange hanging ever so precariously over the mountaintops in the distance. In fifteen minutes, it would be completely hidden. As I sat there on the ground, surrounded by brown pine needles and lush green plant life, I looked to the very top of the towering birch. Its boughs were majestically swaying above me. I ran my eyes down to the base of the age-old tree. Its roots fixed themselves firmly into a boulder the size of a VW Beetle, set there by glaciers thousands of years before. It was the Birch Rock. This extraordinary occurrence of nature is the namesake for one of the most influential places of my life.



As I sat in silence, I reflected upon my memories from my eight summers spent at Birch Rock Camp. There were so many to sift through. From the sweltering days up on the field playing soccer when I was ten, to the camping trips in the mountains when I was thirteen, to becoming a counselor at the age of seventeen. Over the course of the last decade, Birch Rock Camp has become a very important part of my life.

When Weaz, the head counselor, first spoke, I awoke from my daydream. Sunday evenings are a time of reflection at camp. It is tradition for the whole camp to gather around the fire next to the Birch Rock and have discussions we call Tree Talks. This particular Tree Talk was about the importance of paying compliments, or "warm fuzzies," to others. We all came to the agreement that saying little things, such as "thank you" or "good morning" can really make a difference in someone's day.

After the discussion, the entire camp proceeded to write warm fuzzies to each other on slips of paper. There was sense of brotherhood in the air like I had never felt before. Everyone was intently scrawling notes of goodwill to fellow campers and counselors. By the end of the hour, I had a stack of 20 or so warm fuzzies written to me.

When I returned to my cabin that evening, I sat down and began to read. They were some of the most heartfelt notes I have ever read. They ranged from, "Bob, you are a great counselor, thanks for teaching me to kayak," to notes thanking me for being one of their best friends on earth. Sitting there, I realized that being part of the Birch Rock community is much, much more than a summer job. I discovered that I was truly appreciated. I realized that I was not just teaching campers, but I was touching their lives and they were touching mine. It was not just a passing phase, but an experience they, and I, will remember forever.

Bob will be attending Northwestern in Illinois this fall

THE FAITH AND FELLOWSHIP

By Harry Netzer '01

Dave Weeks comes back to camp for a few weeks each summer to lead trips for the younger guys. He practices an older form of camping, one where you cook meals on a skillet over a campfire instead of in a JetBoil stove. I was going with him on an excursion to prepare a campsite on Crooked River. Dave has been my mentor for years; he rowed alongside when I swam five miles around Lake McWain. I was happy to get off campus and into the wilderness with him for the afternoon.

We put our canoe into the current under a bridge, careful not to scrape the bottom on a rock. The river was full and swift from the rains earlier in the season. Dave expected erosion. Sure enough, during the paddle downriver I noticed a spot on the bank where the rush of water had eaten away an almost vertical canyon wall. Its face revealed discrete inch-thick layers of sedimentary rock, deposited one on top of the other, building to a height of ten feet or more. The campsite we came to was a white pine grove on the bank of the river. We explored and decided on the best place to cook on subsequent trips. We dug a fire pit, then lined it with gravel we had brought and a flat river stone; this was to prevent root fires, Dave explained. We shoveled the dirt back in and scattered pine needles to leave no trace of our work. I committed the hidden pit's location to memory for next summer.

On the more arduous way back upstream thunder rumbled and it began to rain. We paddled with silent urgency to get back to the bridge. I was in the front of the canoe providing power while Dave guided our course from the stern. My arms burned and grieved for rest. Once we were safely back at the pickup

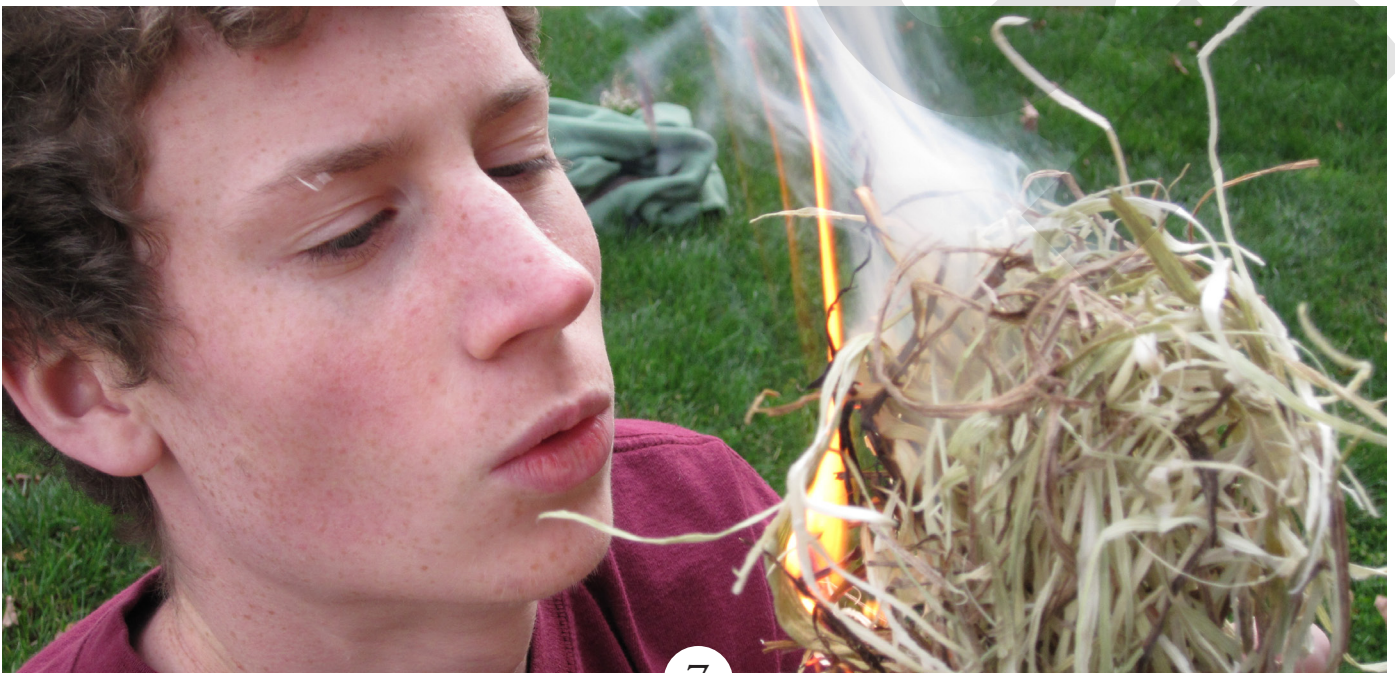
truck and had loaded on the canoe Dave patted my back, hard, and said, "Heck of a paddle, Harry." At that moment I knew exactly why we had spent the afternoon toiling to make the campsite. We were giving to future generations of campers the state of mind I had then: that of simply feeling good about myself. I was filthy and sore but satisfied.

My satisfaction came from getting through the ordeal and knowing I had been working to give young campers the experiences I had when I was their age. Those experiences showed me things impossible to find in everyday life. Upon returning from my earliest hiking trips I noticed that running water and my cot mattress had become amazing luxuries. That feeling was fleeting, but later hikes and paddles conferred a more enduring awareness of running water and a bed as things I can live without.

When camping I feel a kind of brotherhood where the only civilization is the people around you and the only man-made light is from the fire. Those who are not friends may become friends, even if it is only for the duration of the trip. This fellowship keeps you paddling, taking steps, or simply holding your wits together until the trip is over and you have surprised yourself by what you got through.

In a future summer I will take a group of campers to the campsite Dave showed me. For most of them it will be their first time in the woods overnight. I will continue the cycle of outdoor appreciation and knowledge passing down to new campers year after year. Each new generation of boys who venture into the forest is built upon a previous one, sedimentary. Those who find their way to my camp I will treat the way Dave treated me, as the valuable future of the tradition of the outdoors. I know that they will recognize and benefit from the potent friendship that occurs when modern comforts are left behind and a steep trail or long river lies ahead.

Harry will be attending Colby after a gap year in Maine this fall



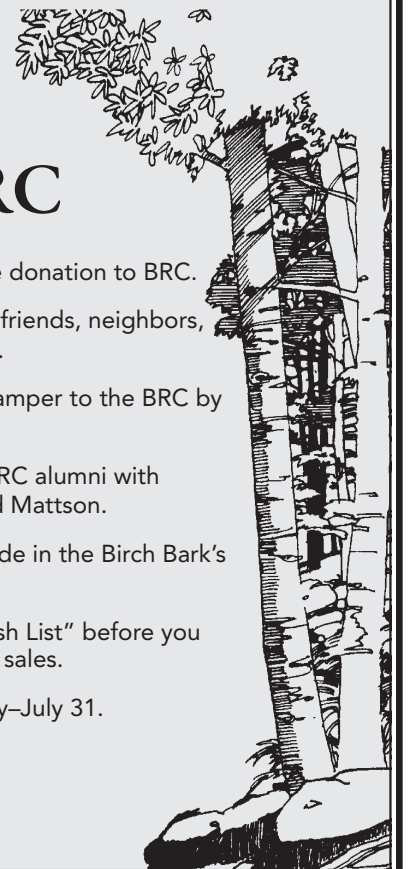
Mark Your Calendars for 2010!



BRC Summer Office Opens	Tuesday, May 31, 2010
Spring Clean-up Day	Saturday, June 5, 2010
BRC Staff Orientation	Monday, June 14, 2010
C.I.T. Orientation	Saturday, June 19, 2010
BRC Opening 1st Session	Wednesday, June 23, 2010
Cubs' Camp I	Wednesday, June 23, 2010
Cubs' Camp I ends	Wednesday, July 7, 2010
BRC 1st Visitation Day	Sunday, July 11, 2010
BRC 1st Session Ends	Saturday, July 17, 2010
BRC Opening 2nd Session	Sunday, July 18, 2010
Cubs' Camp II	Sunday, July 18, 2010
Maine Wilderness Adventure	Sunday, July 18, 2010
Cubs' Camp ends	Saturday, July 31, 2010
Alumni Day	Saturday, July 31, 2010
BRC 2nd Visitation Day	Sunday, August 1, 2010
BRC for Boys & MWA ends	Tuesday, August 10, 2010
BRC Family Camp	Friday, August 13, 2010
BRC Family Camp ends	Tuesday, August 17, 2010

It's Easy to Help BRC

- Send a tax-deductible donation to BRC.
- Promote BRC among friends, neighbors, family and colleagues.
- Refer a prospective camper to the BRC by phone or email.
- Host a gathering of BRC alumni with Directors Deering and Mattson.
- Send us news to include in the Birch Bark's Alumni News column.
- Ask us about our "Wish List" before you have your spring yard sales.
- Join us for Alumni Day–July 31.



BIRCH ROCK CAMP

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